

CPYRGHT

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Confusion Over the Cuban Affair

Lack of Administration Co-ordination, Not Any Goof in Operation, Is Blamed

The administration has handled the domestic politics of its Cuba problem with unusual clumsiness. As a result confusion has been compounded. But that is not to say that there was a goof in operations, or a "photo gap," or a jurisdictional fight between the CIA and the Air Force, or even that Senator Keating is a prophet.

What has been wrong with the administration approach has been a lack of co-ordination. For one thing, it has allowed post-mortem inquiries on Cuba to become the property of a gaggle of different Congressional committees—none of them with clearly defined terms of reference. There is Senator Dirksen's one-man investigation. There is the investigation of the Senate Preparedness Subcommittee under Senator Stennis. There are inquiries by subcommittees of the House Foreign Affairs and the Senate Foreign Relations Committees. It has been rumored that Congressman Hardy's Government Operations Committee is considering the possibility of an investigation of the Cuban policy of the Eisenhower administration. The administration's attention to the problem has been so lax, that it seems not even to have taken steps to block the appointment of one of its sharpest and most irresponsible critics—Senator Thurmond of South Carolina—to the Stennis subcommittee.

It is also becoming clear that the administration has been speaking with several voices. One of the principal administration witnesses has been the CIA Director John McCone, a Republican who

was one of the hottest of the hawks during the week-long deliberation which preceded the Cuba quarantine last October. Mr. McCone apparently has been intimating that he felt as early as August and September that the "Russians" were putting offensive missiles into Cuba.

Another of the principal administration witnesses has been Defense Secretary McNamara. He has been at great pains to show that the first indisputable evidence of offensive missile bases on Cuba came through the photos taken by the U-2 overflight of October 14. To drive home the point, he showed the last previous photos of the exact same area—photos which were taken on a flight of September 5, and which showed no offensive missile sites. As a result there has grown up the theory of the "photo gap" which supposedly existed between September 5 and October 14. This theory lends itself to a view dear to the critics of the administration, and which seems to fit in with Mr. McCone's testimony. Namely, that the administration failed to press home photo surveillance at the critical moment either because of negligence, or because of a jurisdictional battle, or because it wanted to delay the crisis until the eve of elections.

The facts are very different. Through most of 1961 and 1962 U-2 flights over Cuba were going on at the rate of two a month. In September, 1962, the rate was increased to four per month. The flight of September 5 covered the western part of the island where offensive

missile launching sites were not yet under construction. Subsequent flights on September 17, 26 and 29, and on October 5 and 7 turned up nothing, either because the sites were not yet in, or because the wrong areas were covered, or because of cloud cover.

Many scheduled flights had to be cancelled because of bad weather. That is how it happened that the first indisputable evidence came on October 14.

It is true, as the White House has announced, that on October 6, Air Force planes were substituted for CIA planes in the over-flight operation. But that came about not, as has been alleged, because of a jurisdictional fight which delayed photo operations. The fact is that the Air Force planes were technically inferior. The change was made mainly because the Air Force had more planes available.

As to Senator Keating, the prevailing confusion has made it seem that the administration was either wrong or disingenuous while he was right all along. But has it been all along? And has he been right? His first mention of offensive missiles in Cuba seems to have occurred, not in August and September as so many suppose, but in a Senate speech of October 10. At that time he referred to "at least a half-dozen launching sites for Intermediate Range Tactical Missiles." In fact, only three launching sites were ever discovered. By itself the disparity in numbers may seem unimportant. But it suggests that the source of the Senator's information was the under-current of refugee gossip which looks good in hindsight, but upon which no responsible Government can take action without supporting evidence.